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ORIGINAL PAPER

Archival objects in motion: historians' appropriation of sources in nineteenth-century Austria and Switzerland

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Abstract This contribution examines the social, material, and epistemic practices of historians and their counterparts engaged in the textual and visual reproduction of historical sources in nineteenth-century Austria and Switzerland. The *Schweizerische Urkundenregister* (1863–1877), a Swiss register of medieval charters, and the *Monumenta graphica medii aevi* (1859–1883), an Austrian collection of photographic facsimiles of medieval sources, were both intended to make historical sources accessible outside the archives in the framework of national history. The article analyzes institutional collaborations and the social interactions among the actors involved and follows the trajectories of the mobilized archival objects. These projects for national source publications appear as a negotiated social practice, in which archival objects were dislocated conceptually as well as materially in order to be stabilized and reified again in new infrastructures of research. The conflicts surrounding the projects reveal disputes about authority over the archival records, their significance, and the techniques required to represent them properly, and show how the emergence of scholarly source publications accompanied a conscious erasure of older contexts of meaning.

Keywords Archives · Historical scholarship · Switzerland · Austria · Photography · Edition · Historical source

When Ludwig von Pastor, a German historian of the medieval papacy and professor of history at Innsbruck, tried to get access to the Vatican Archives for the first time in 1878, a severe cardinal secretary stopped him. The high-ranking cleric told him

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that not even cardinals were allowed to enter the archives; he pointed at an inscription over the entrance to the archive referring to a decree by Sixtus V that threatened to excommunicate whoever got into the archives without authorization. Pastor answered: "Your Eminence, I don't even want to go inside, I am happy if the records come out to me" (von Pastor 1926, p. 176f). As a fervently Catholic historian who saw it as his scholarly and political duty to enhance esteem for papal rule, Pastor did not mean to be ironic. Still, in this incident the gate of the archive appears as a line of contestation between the archive and historians, where the trajectories of archival objects in and out of the archive were disputed. Issues that have been identified as characteristic of different periods in the history of the archive (Nora 2003, p. 48) can be seen at work simultaneously: a view of the archive as a site where records of institutional power and legal entitlements piled up and institutional memory was stored clashed with an understanding of the archive as a repository of sources to be used by historians. Moreover, Pastor's reply highlights the historians' efforts to make the records mobile. Indeed, although the material and conceptual mobilization of historical things out of the archive was by no means new at the time, this conflict-laden process took a new turn in the middle and last third of the nineteenth century in the context of historical research.

This essay concentrates on how historical documents got out of the archive—and back again—and were transformed in order to contribute to historical scholarship during the nineteenth century. This process can be understood as a part of archival and scholarly practice as well as a part of the social politics of history. Even as the practices sketched here expanded on early modern policies and practices regarding the handling of historical documents inside and outside the archive, they also obliterated certain features of those older operations, as will be seen. The analysis draws on two case studies about practices of historical research in German-speaking Austria and Switzerland from the 1850s to the 1880s, which aimed at the collection and reproduction of sources.

In the nineteenth century, large-scale enterprises to produce editions, registers, and facsimiles of historical sources drew together material from archives, libraries, and previous publications. Compared to eighteenth-century source publications, the new textual and visual representations assembled and arranged sources in more extensive collections, and they were often tied closely to the development of national histories, as can be seen in the influential case of the German *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. This vast series of national source editions, published from 1826 on by the *Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde*, revived the Holy Empire of the Middle Ages and suggested a culturally defined German unity (Ernst 2003). By editing written sources in terms of their pertinence to a national entity, scholars provided a material substrate of "national" documents to historiography (Saxer 2010, forthcoming). The first section of the paper explores the institutional collaboration among scholars, the archives, and the state in two such enterprises. A second section looks more closely into the social interactions among different groups of actors involved in archival research. The third section takes an object-oriented perspective and asks what happened to the historical objects in the course of their mobilization by historians. How did the dislocation of objects affect archival

practice, the epistemic status of the historical things moved in and out, and the local and national politics of history?

In the history of science, scholarly agency increasingly has been understood as being shaped by things. Actor-network theory, as well as other strands of the sociology and history of science after the practice turn, has developed an understanding of science as a social, epistemic, and material practice through which objects accumulate social power and meaning (Daston 2000; Bowker and Star 1999; Knorr Cetina 1999; Rheinberger 1997; Latour 1987). In this view, the objects of knowledge targeted by scholarly inquiry—initially ill defined and blurred—undergo various stages of closure that successively elide the controversies and decision making through which they are constituted. They become forceful, stable entities through sequences of inscription processes or translations (Lenoir 1998; Rheinberger 1997; Latour 1987). Taking up this perspective, the historical documents found in archives can be analyzed as material as well as epistemic objects at the center of scholarly and archival attention and manipulation. More concretely, such a perspective allows us to explore the object-related practices of the actors involved, to analyze their understandings of the historical material they dealt with, and to understand the transformations that historical objects underwent through scholarly research. Thus, an objectural perspective (Knorr Cetina 2001) helps us to focus on the trajectories and dynamics rather than on the results of interactions among scholars, the archives, and society.

Nationalizing historical sources

The Swiss national historical society, the *Allgemeine Geschichtsforschende Gesellschaft der Schweiz*, in 1855 began work on the *Schweizerische Urkundenregister*, a register of all early and high medieval charters in the area of Switzerland. The editorial committee of this undertaking—the professional historian Basilius Hidber, the archivist and politician Josef Ignaz Amiet, and the clergyman Urban Winistörfer—succeeded in engaging a huge multilingual network of collaborators from all over Switzerland, and even from abroad. These sometimes amateur contributors collected transcripts and summaries of charters from many state and ecclesiastical archives, and from early modern editions. The heterogeneous material was compiled and transformed into a chronological register containing short *regestae* of charters by the main editor Hidber and was published from 1863 to 1877 (Schweizerisches Urkundenregister 1863–1877). With this project, the national historical society underlined its mission to "provide a solid foundation for the history of our fatherland in order to facilitate a definitive historical account."[1] The register was supported and financed by the *Allgemeine Geschichtsforschende Gesellschaft* and the Swiss federal state because it allowed historical research on the Swiss past without having to resort explicitly to historiographical interpretations of this past. Only a few years after the *Sonderbundskrieg*, the civil war of 1847/1848

[1] Direction of the Allgemeinen Geschichtforschenden Gesellschaft der Schweiz (AGGS) to the Swiss Federal Council, n. d. [1858]: Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv (BAR) E 88 -/–, Bd. 9, Doss. 85.

won by the liberal forces, and the foundation of the modern Swiss state in 1848, such interpretations would have been extremely contested (Zimmer 2003; Metzger 2003). All the same, the register faced increasingly intense questioning from the media in the late 1860s and was the subject of an official inquiry by the parliament in 1872. The fact-finding committee engaged to evaluate the *Schweizerische Urkundenregister* criticized both the opaque financial accounting of the project and some of its scientific decisions.[2] This led to the premature abandonment of the project in 1877. Nevertheless, the register remained an important work of reference in German-speaking historiography for many years (Saxer 2005, pp. 273–336).

In producing the *Schweizerische Urkundenregister*, archives and historians collaborated in very heterogeneous ways. The landscape of historical research, the university system, and the archives in nineteenth-century Switzerland had all developed separately without centralization. Thus, the federal archive, which had been established only on the founding of the modern Swiss state, was engaged in the official politics of national history in many ways, but had no funds for the medieval period (Arlettaz 1998; Meyrat 1972). Instead, it was the archives of the cantons—especially the ones that had developed from former city-states—, of ecclesiastical institutions, and of local communes that provided most of the material for the register of charters. Most of these archives did not have yet full-time archivists in the mid-nineteenth century, nor were they controlled by the federal state (Coutaz 2007). Neither the federal officials nor the national historical society were able to force any of the involved institutional actors to participate in the *Schweizerische Urkundenregister*. Even the historical society, the only national channel for historical research in Switzerland, found it difficult to address and represent historians evenly from among the different linguistic, political, and confessional segments of the country; it remained most successful in Protestant regions of the German-speaking part (Vergleichende Uebersicht 1905).

At the same time as the Swiss historians planned their register, high-ranking officials in the Austrian Ministry of Culture and Education and a leading historian and diplomatist, Theodor Sickel, were designing a series of paleographic tables to be issued under the title *Monumenta graphica medii aevi ex archivis et bibliothecis imperii Austriaci collecta* (Graphic monuments of the Middle Ages from the archives and libraries of the Austrian Empire). The project was prepared from 1856 on under the direction of Sickel and produced a series of 200 photographic facsimiles of diverse historical sources, mainly charters and single pages of codices, which were published between 1859 and 1883 (Monumenta graphica 1859–1883). The sources were chosen to represent the national history of the Habsburg Empire in the Middle Ages. The *Monumenta graphica* were the first research project in historical scholarship to take advantage of photography on a large scale as a means of scientific visualization (Saxer 2005, pp. 337–395; for earlier uses of photography

[2] Basilius Hidber to Georg von Wyss, 20 March 1863, from Bern: Zentralbibliothek Zürich (ZBZ) FA v. Wyss IX 316.1. Hidber, 18 February 1863, from Bern: ibid. Eidgenössisches Departement des Innern to the AGGS, 19 September 1870: BAR J II.127 -/1:23. Report of the investigatory committe (Untersuchungskommission) to the Eidgenössische Departement des Innern, 6 August 1873: BAR E 88 -/– Bd. 9, Doss. 86.

in historical scholarship s. Ernst 2003, p. 270; Hilka 1985, p. 298; Lhotsky 1954, p. 56; Chronique 1840, p. 408; s. also Schwartz 2000).

The *Monumenta graphica* were realized in the context of the national *Institut für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* (the Institute for Austrian Historical Research), established in 1854 in Vienna as a university-affiliated post-graduate institution. The institute trained scholars specifically in the auxiliary sciences and was aimed at future history professors and archivists (Höflechner 2002, p. 222f.; Lhotsky 1954; Stoy 2007). At the beginning, it lacked state-of-the-art paleographic training materials, a failing the *Monumenta graphica* were designed to remedy. In addition, the *Monumenta graphica* were created to be sold as a new paleographic tool and as a technically glamorous vehicle of national historical representation. The technical choices behind the project reflected the new emphasis on historical research—instead of historical narrative—that influenced Austrian officers of national history at the time.[3] Photography, with its rhetoric of guaranteeing an "exact reproduction,"[4] as the advertising brochure put it, conveyed a desire to enable the unconditional "autopsy" (*Autopsie* or *Beaugenscheinigung*) of the historical sources, an attitude toward historical practice epitomized by the *Institut für österreichische Geschichtsforschung*.[5]

In its initial phase, the project benefited greatly from a close cooperation with the imperial press in Vienna. The director of this national printing office, the multitalented inventor Alois Auer, headed one of the most advanced photographic studios of the era and possessed the technical skills to carry out such a project (Koschatzky 1983, pp. 51f.; Auer von Welsbach 1851). Nevertheless, the *Monumenta graphica* became entwined in conflicts between the initiators of the project and other state officials and historians, who sought to block it on various grounds. One of the issues in conflict was whether photography would harm the originals. After a series of reports and experiments by historians and scientists, the project overcame these problems.[6] In addition, the *Monumenta graphica* were confronted with technological difficulties that were solved only tardily. The tendency of the photographs to fade prematurely led to the adaption of heliogravure only in 1875. While the *Monumenta graphica* had been groundbreaking in the 1850s and early 1860s, by the 1870s, photography became established more widely as a tool for

[3] Joseph Feil, presentation of 27 September 1856: ÖStA (Österreichisches Staatsarchiv), AVA, MCU 4A, Fasz. 668, 6980/1856, ff. 2–6: 3[r]. Simon Laschitzer to the direction of the Institut für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung on 28 December 1877 from Vienna: Archive of the Institut für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung (IfÖG), Institutsakten, Einlauf 1869–1882.

[4] Prospectus prepared by the publisher (French version), 15 March 1859: IfÖG, Institutsakten, Monumenta graphica.

[5] Joseph Feil, presentation of 27 September 1856: ÖStA AVA, MCU 4A, Fasz. 668, 6980/1856, ff. 2–6, 16r: 3[r].

[6] Theodor von Sickel, report to the Ministry for Culture and Education, 20 March 1857: ÖStA AVA, MCU 4A, Fasz. 671, 4975/1857, ff. 17–21: 17[r]. Theodor von Sickel, report to the Ministry for Culture and Education, 20 March 1858: ibid., 4822/1858, ff. 18–25: 18[r]–19[r]. The director of the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchivs to the Ministry for Culture and Education, 26 June 1857: ibid., 10866/1857, ff. 6–8, 11. [Beda Dudík], Parere, undat., unsign.: ibid., 10866/1857, ff. 9f. Theodor Sickel, Report, 8 July 1857: ibid., 11603/1857, ff. 7–16. Alois Auer, Stellungnahme der k. k. Haus- und Staatsdruckerei, 19 March 1858: ibid., 4822/1858, ff. 36f. Joseph Redtenbacher, Gutachten, 23 February 1858: ibid., 4822/1858, ff. 38f.

making facsimiles (Meier 1900). Still, the *Monumenta* were very successful as a prestige project of the Austrian educational system, as an innovative application of technology to the humanities and as a paleographic tool, even if they remained quite exclusive owing to the considerable price of the sheets (Saxer 2005, pp. 337–395).

In Austria, scholars who wanted to access archival sources were confronted with a huge and centralized state apparatus that regarded the archive as a power base for dynastic and state rule. This proved to be an ambivalent precondition for the project. On the one hand, the *Monumenta graphica* were hindered by officers responsible for the central archive of the empire. Many of the most interesting sources lay in the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv*, founded in the eighteenth century as the secret archive of the Habsburg dynasty, which had gradually expanded into a general state archive (Hochedlinger 2004). Its director at the time was extremely opposed to the project of source photography and kept the historians from producing facsimiles for the project (Saxer 2005, pp. 360f.). Consequently, Theodor Sickel and his allies had to turn their attention to other archival repositories. On the other hand, many administrators in the complicated structure of state agencies were enormously helpful in mobilizing historical sources for the *Monumenta graphica*. Notably, the Ministry of the Interior sent out instructions to the *Statthaltereien* (prefectures) of the different crown lands that obliged them to facilitate access to the requested sources. The historians drew upon state power for their project during a critical phase of Austrian politics, as the nationalist movements in different crown lands were becoming more radical and the wars in Italy in 1859 and 1866 were taking place.

The two projects discussed here therefore represent different modes of mobilization and presentation of historical sources. For the *Schweizerische Urkundenregister*, historical documents came to be mobilized not as material objects or as integral texts, but in a derived form, as transcriptions and summaries that were then reinserted as *regestae* in the new order of a register. For the *Monumenta graphica*, in contrast, many of the sources were temporarily taken out of the archives in order to capture their contents for photographs. Moreover, the cases show different degrees and varieties of state affinity. In the Swiss case, the central state was active mainly as a financial supporter and supervisor, whereas the Austrian project was very directly formed and facilitated by mechanisms of state organization and state enforcement. These different forms of state backing led to distinctive styles of working with archivists and other protagonists of historical culture, as will be shown later.

In both cases, however, the enterprises of the historians were deeply entwined with archival policies and served as part of official political strategies regarding the strengthening of national history. The historical objects in question were taken out of their repositories and reinserted in the new contexts of a national register or a national photo album of sources, respectively, created by historical research. They now represented "Swiss charters" and "Austrian monuments."

Negotiated research practices

The historians in charge of building up these new, mobile collections of sources deployed a heterogeneous array of social and political strategies to detach the

historical records from the archives, which brought into play a wealth of idiosyncratic interests and research approaches regarding the selection and treatment of sources.

In the case of the *Schweizerische Urkundenregister*, the historical sources were gathered through a loose network of over 120 collaborators who collected transcriptions, collations, and charters from all over Switzerland. Their social and occupational structure reveals a considerable affinity to the state and the church, as well as proximity to the archives based on intimate knowledge of the administrative foundations of state or ecclesiastic power: they were, above all, clerics, but also included many archivists, teachers, and legal practitioners. Many of them came from the small stratum of men holding official positions in cantonal and federal politics.[7] Since the register was based on voluntary contributions, the project was dependent upon the infrastructure, knowledge, goodwill, and verve of its contributors and had to accommodate their needs and working standards. Thus, it made sense for the editors to be open toward divergent conceptual approaches and notions of research. In the first phase of the project, the contributors registered the charters based on a sketchy working plan distributed by the responsible editors in 1856. The plan (Zirkularschreiben 1856, p. IX) left space for individual practices of registration and did not specify whether the contributors had to consult the original charter. In particular, it left open how to summarize a charter correctly and how to render the "essential content" (Zirkularschreiben 1856, p. IX) of the legal act documented by the charter—a procedure even the sample registration that was circulated in order to demonstrate some formal aspects of the register did not describe in a satisfactory way.[8] Consequently, the subsequent identification and inventorying of the charters were quite heterogeneous, and the quality of *regestae* coming in was extremely uneven. Amateur collectors of charters, for example, contributed personal inventories that were based on very specific and often contingent choices. Many of these amateur collaborators had never seen an archive from the inside, since they preferred to act as "workers in the sitting room" (*Stubenarbeiter*), exploiting extant early modern source editions instead of researching the archives as "archivists" (*Archivare*).[9] But even the proper archivists tended to rely on the inventories of their archives instead of going back to the originals (Saxer 2005, p. 311f).

In many cases, the project's dependence upon local resources and existing infrastructures led to long-winded negotiations. For example, the editors tried to persuade François Forel, a historian from the western part of Switzerland, to contribute *regestae* from his own ongoing register of charters for the French-speaking regions. Forel was willing to do so only under the condition that the

[7] This analysis is based on a prosopographic evaluation of all the collaborators mentioned in the protocols of the AGGS, and in the letters between the main editor and the collaborators: Burgerbibliothek Bern (BB), Papers Basilius Hidber; ZBZ FA v. Wyss; ZBZ FA Meyer von Knonau; and the mentions in the prefaces of the *Schweizerischen Urkundenregister*. For 107 of the 124 mentioned persons, professional and institutional backgrounds could be identified.

[8] Conspect und Probeblatt zu einem Allgemeinen schweizerischen Urkunden-Repertorium (1858): BAR E 88 -/–, Bd. 9, Doss. 85.

[9] Urban Winistörfer to Basilius Hidber, 11 December 1855, from Solothurn: BB Bern N: Mss.h.h.XXVI.103. Original emphasis.

Schweizerische Urkundenregister change its criteria for ordering charters from a chronological system to one based on medieval dioceses—a condition that in the end caused the negotiations to break down.[10] Forel's demand can be read as symbolically defending Francophone Switzerland, emblematized by the diocese of Lausanne. As a major rubric in the requested new design, this diocese would have eclipsed other entities, such as the lordship of Bern, under whose rule extensive parts of French-speaking Switzerland had fallen in later centuries. To mine the archives of the monastery of St. Gallen, the most important Swiss repository of early medieval charters, the editors even had to make a financial deal with another historical society. The cantonal historical society of Zurich was planning its own edition of the charters of St. Gallen and was willing to contribute its results only in exchange for financial participation in their edition (Schweizerisches Urkundenregister, pp. XVIf.).[11]

After some years, the project's degree of standardization came to be seen as insufficient. The main editor, Basilius Hidber, therefore reworked the first series of most heterogeneous material before arranging the entries in the register. In contrast to his collaborators, he also returned methodically to the original charters, which required extensive travel to cantonal, communal, and ecclesiastical archives. Hidber made sure he could gain admission into these archives by establishing amicable relations with the archivists and by offering incentives that included photographic facsimiles of charters, editions, and laudatory mentions of the archivists in prefaces and in front of politicians (Saxer 2005, p. 294–308). As in the earlier stages of the project, the *Schweizerische Urkundenregister* thus remained dependent upon the cooperation and specialized knowledge of local actors for access to the historical sources as well as for the selection and assessment of material.

Similarly, the Austrian *Monumenta graphica* relied on local knowledge and infrastructures and had to deal with the interests and goals of the local guardians of the sources such as state archivists, clerics, and librarians, who were supposed to open their archives and indicate which sources were best suited to be photographed. Sickel in return offered them improved standing with the central administration, but also a copy of the precious *Monumenta graphica* as an incentive (Saxer 2005, p. 362). In contrast to the Swiss historians, Sickel was able to use a more authoritative style and to assert his own views more aggressively by exploiting his good relations to the administrative units responsible for the archives. Such tactics were exerted in an especially forceful way in the Italian lands that had formed Lombardo-Venetia since the Congress of Vienna. Since the *Monumenta* sought to provide an even representation of both different centuries and different regions of Austria, the Italian sources were of special interest to Sickel, especially since the northern Italian archives disposed of many early medieval charters not to be found in Vienna. In Padua and Venice, however, local paleographers and archivists had already taken up simultaneous projects for collections of facsimiles from local

[10] Basilius Hidber to Georg von Wyss, 28 September 1859, from Bern: ZBZ FA v. Wyss IX 316.1. Basilius Hidber to the direction of the AGGS, 20 April 1873: BAR E 88 -/–, Bd. 9, Doss. 86.

[11] Basilius Hidber to Georg von Wyss, 28. September 1859, from Bern: ZBZ FA v. Wyss IX 316.1. Basilius Hidber to the direction of the AGGS, 20 April 1873: BAR E 88 -/–, Bd. 9, Doss. 86. Basilius Hidber to Gerold Meyer von Knonau, 22 April 1869, from Bern: ZBZ FA Meyer v. Knonau 34y.

archives; in the case of Venice, the project also involved photographic procedures.[12] The diplomatist from Vienna succeeded in having these projects discontinued. While Sickel depicted these cancellations in his memoirs as the outcome of amicable agreements (Bretholz 1909, p. 16), other records show that they occurred after massive pressure from the state administration. In the case of the reluctant archivist Cesare Foucard in Venice, Sickel went even further and tried to penalize him by favoring other, competing archivists with job offers and material resources.[13] The politics of mobilizing the Italian sources can be seen as part of the desperate efforts of the Austrian government to install an Austrian politics of history in the Italian lands, which were about to break away from Austria in the wars of 1859 and 1866 (Rumpler 1997, p. 339–341; Gottsmann 2001). As a consequence, the *Monumenta graphica* remained quite radically dependent on the course of daily politics. When Austria lost Lombardy in the Austro-Sardinian war of 1859, the negatives of 14 photographs of charters from Milanese archives could no longer be obtained for the project.[14]

In addition to political power, Theodor Sickel was able to mobilize supplementary allies in his hunt for photogenic sources, who brought in the authority of technical knowledge. He worked together with a chemist who provided testimony concerning the innocuousness of photography, he relied on the famous *k. k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei*, and he employed well-known local photographers who could take the needed pictures of the sources locally, which enhanced the likelihood that local actors would allow the photographic reproduction of sources. The technique of photography thus worked as a medium of authorization and empowerment. While it was not seen as a totally new method for rendering sources, but rather as a continuation of older techniques for producing facsimiles, photography still embodied the ideal of a mechanical reproduction, novel in its perfection, which let the phenomena speak for themselves. The prospectus of the *Monumenta graphica* therefore emphasized that photography produced an exact reproduction unaltered by an artistic hand; consistently, the editors also guaranteed that the photographs had not been retouched.[15]

But not only Theodor Sickel and his allies, representing the central agencies of official Austrian science, counted on the authority of photography. In 1862, when Sickel wanted to obtain a precious codex from the monastery of Kremsmünster to Vienna in order to have it photographed, the abbot of the monastery instead sent six homemade photographs of the manuscript to the Austrian capital. One of his

[12] The competing projects were lead by the director of the city archive of Padua, Andrea Gloria, and the director of the Venetian Archivio ai Frari, Cesare Foucard and were designed to meet the needs of the teaching of paleography at the University of Padua and the "scuola di paleografia" in Venice. Theodor Sickel, report to the MCU, 8 July 1857: ÖStA AVA, MCU 4A, Fasz. 671, 11603/1857, ff. 7–16: 11^{v}f.

[13] Cesare Foucard, protocol of a meeting with Theodor von Sickel, 10 December 1856: IfÖG Institutsakten: Monumenta graphica. Theodor Sickel, report to the MCU, 8 July 1857: ÖStA AVA, MCU 4A, Fasz. 671, 11603/1857, ff. 7–16: 12^{r}. Theodor Sickel, report, 20 March 1858: ÖStA AVA, MCU 4A, Fasz. 671, 4822/1858, ff. 18–25: 23^{v}–25^{r}.

[14] Theodor Sickel to the Ministry for Culture and Education, 5 August 1859: ÖStA AVA, MCU 4A, Fasz. 668, 12205/1859, ff. 2–6: 3^{r-v}. Ministry for Culture and Education to the k. k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, draft, August 1859: ibid., ff. 1, 9, 2^{r}: 1^{r-v}.

[15] Publisher's prospectus (French version), 15 March 1859: IfÖG Institutsakten, Monumenta graphica.

brethren, a professor of physics at the monastery's gymnasium, had taken almost 2 months to produce these pictures, in order to prevent any loss of control over the original codex.[16] While Sickel, who sought total supervision over the photographic process, did not take up this offer, he had to give in another case. A well-known photographer in Verona demanded that he be allowed to produce not only the negatives, but also the positives of the photographic pictures—which Sickel normally produced only at the *k. k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei* in order to keep them uniform. Dependent upon the photographer, Sickel had to make an exception to his standards, since his counterpart had the necessary understanding with the local archivists, who let him take their sources out to his studio.[17]

Mobilizing archival objects

If we follow the collaborators involved in these projects in what they did when they collected, registered, and photographed their sources, we see intricate procedures at work that changed the nature of the archival objects they gathered. In contrast to the official self-portrayal of the *Schweizerische Urkundenregister*, for example, this work did not in fact start "from the originals", nor did it generate its published *regestae* through a linear process.[18] The working procedures actually included transcribing originals in the archives, collating various copies, summing up older descriptions in the registries of the archives or in older published *regestae*, copying charters in the form they had assumed in early modern collectanea, and so forth. Through these multifaceted practices, an enormous number of new artifacts—lists, slips of paper, letters describing newly found sources—was produced, which often overwhelmed the responsible editor. Only as a second step did the main editor go back to the archives to compare the items received from his various collaborators, which often were copies of copies of copies, against the originals in the archive. In the end, the *regestae* were further standardized and inserted in the purely chronological order of the *Urkundenregister*. The ideal of taking material directly from the archives—mirroring the contemporary ideal of objectivity of historical scholarship (Moore 2008, pp. 94f., 102; Iggers 2006; Parsis-Barubé 2006; Smith 1998; Hardtwig 1991)—was counteracted by a working reality of multiple, nonlinear translations between different, derivative working elements, which were only later supplemented by archival autopsy. This was even true for the later, large-scale edition of the *diplomata* of the medieval German Empire led by Theodor Sickel and his students for the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, which pioneered a more thorough focus on the originals and delivered a first volume in 1879 (Die Urkunden Konrad I., Heinrich I. und Otto I. 1879–1884). Accordingly, going back

[16] Abbot Augustin Beslhuber to the Ministry for Culture and Education, 1 March 1862: ÖStA AVA, MCU 4A, Fasz. 693, 2473/1862, f. 2.

[17] Theodor Sickel, report of 8 Juli 1857: ÖStA AVA, MCU 4A, Fasz. 671, 11603/1857, ff. 7–16: 10^{v}–11^{r}.

[18] Basilius Hidber to the Eidgenössische Departement des Innern, 4 March 1862: BAR E 88 -/–, Bd. 9, Doss. 85.

to the archives constituted only one aspect of the working practices of the archivists, historians, and amateurs involved in registering and editing.

In the case of the *Monumenta graphica*, the working practices included identifying and combining suitable written sources from a huge variety of archives, preparing them for photography, actually taking their picture inside or outside the archive, producing, and publishing the illustrations—the photographs came as series of unbound sheets—and supplementing them with transcriptions. In order to photograph them, the archival objects had to be adjusted to the photographic apparatus. The parchments were flattened with the help of distilled water and squeezed under a frame of glass before being taken out of the archive to be photographed. The seals were protected by packing and sewing them in a textile cushion. In the case of codices, single sheets were detached from the binding, and the unity of the manuscript temporarily destroyed.[19] The archival objects made visible through photography were arranged in technically prescribed ways and transformed into a photographic image, which included a very selective view of the object. In this case, resorting to the archives (or, in the case of some manuscripts, to libraries) was absolutely mandatory, because the whole project served the idea of a perfect simulation of the autopsy of sources. Even so, the initial access to the sources was mediated through derivative knowledge about sources from editions, indexes, archival registries, and so forth. As was the case for the *Urkundenregister*, the actual work in the archive constituted only a small fraction of the whole working process.

In such practices, we see various understandings about the relevant archival objects at work, which affected the appearance, epistemic valence, and meanings of the mobilized written sources. While the entrepreneurs behind these the historical projects wanted to create new, comprehensive instruments of historical scholarship in a national historical framework, the local contributors and archivists brought with them their own understandings of the sources in question, which relied on uses of the documents that were not only scholarly, but also aimed at legal, religious, and political authority and originated in local historical traditions.

In the case of the Swiss *Urkundenregister*, multiple understandings of the charters' characteristics conflicted with the editors' goals. For the editors, charters were material entities that documented historical processes, but others saw them as juridical documents resulting from legal transactions. This juridical understanding rested not on the concrete material entity, but on the content of its text. Most of the notaries and other law professionals simply did not care whether a record they provided to the *Urkundenregister* came from an original or a copy. Often, it was not even entirely clear whether such collaborators had consulted the original charters or their medieval or early modern duplicates.[20] Moreover, the main editor, Basilius Hidber, had to be careful not to offend local protagonists by questioning the worth of especially ancient and revered charters that constituted the material foundation

[19] Theodor Sickel, report about his visit to Hungarian archives, 1 June 1858: ÖStA, AVA MCU 4A, Fasz. 671, 93601/1858, ff. 4–6: 5^{r}. Report, 20 March 1858: ÖStA AVA, MCU 4A, Fasz. 671, 4822/1858, ff. 18–25:17^{v}–18^{r}. See also Krumbacher 1906, p. 624.

[20] Report of the inves0tigatory committee to the Eidgenössische Departement des Innern, 6 August 1873: BAR E 88 -/– Bd. 9, Doss. 86. Jakob Kaiser, Notizzettel 21: BAR E 88 -/–, Bd. 10, Doss. 91.

for local narratives of origin. For instance, Hidber originally wanted to begin the *Urkundenregister* with some charters from the monastery of St. Maurice in the Valais, allegedly dating to the fifth century. Out of fear of disgruntling the brethren of St. Maurice, Hidber hesitated to remove them after a colleague pointed out that these records were forged. The monastery was already famous for its restrictive treatment of external visitors, and the traveling editor feared he would no longer be able to get access to its archives. After extensive consultations, he decided to mention the forged documents only in the preface of the register, where he described them not as "forged" (*gefälscht*), as they had been described by his fellow historian, but as "spurious" (*unecht*), which he considered a milder term.[21]

Similarly, in the case of the *Monumenta graphica*, Theodor Sickel was confronted with a vast array of local interpretations and contextualizations of the documents in question. His local counterparts tried to keep these contexts intact. For example, the abbot of Kremsmünster mentioned earlier also meticulously produced a sophisticated array of representative material from the codex in question; he delivered not only the homemade photographs discussed earlier, but also an extensive commentary and interpretation of their paleographic worth.[22] Other archivists and librarians from the various crown lands also sent in ready-made packages of *regestae* containing their own choices of documents or facsimiles along with voluminous explications that sought to make clear why these documents were crucial to their regional histories. A Hungarian monastery even resorted to having its own archivist escort a prized codex to Vienna, where he had instructions to monitor the process of photography at the Viennese studio of the *k. k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei* and to comment on 'his' historical object.[23] Especially in the monasteries, such documents were still in use as sources of institutional authority, as was also the case for some state documents. Most dramatically, the director of the central *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* refused to let some eminent charters be photographed because he feared that their "*replication in the way of photography*, i.e. in a way that makes it impossible or difficult to discern the copy from the original, would lead to a devaluation of the latter."[24] This view was tightly associated with legal traditions about the use of documents, which prescribed that copies of juridical documents had to be accompanied by an official notarization specifying the exact status of the copy. The archivist feared that photography would destroy the archival management of authenticity and that the copy might live an uncontrolled, not officially sanctioned life of its own. Thus, the new technique was seen as eroding the administrative and political power of the archive (Blouin and Rosenberg 2006; Ketelaar 2002).

[21] Basilius Hidber to Georg von Wyss, 8 August 1861, from Bern: ZBZ FA v. Wyss IX 316.1. Georg von Wyss to Basilius Hidber, 9 August1861, from Zürich: BB Bern N Mss.h.h.XXVI.103. Basilius Hidber to Georg von Wyss, 13 August 1861, from Bern: BB Bern N: Mss.h.h.XXVI.103.

[22] Abbot Augustin Beslhuber to the Ministry for Culture and Education, 1 March 1862: ÖStA AVA, MCU 4A, Fasz. 693, 2473/1862, ff. 1f.

[23] Ministerial presentation, draft, 1 June 1858: ÖStA AVA MCU 4A, Fasz. 671, 93601/1858, f. 1^{v}.

[24] The director of the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchivs to the Ministry for Culture and Education, 26 June 1857: ÖStA AVA, MCU 4A, Fasz. 671, 10866/1857, ff. 6–8, 11: 7^{v}–8^{r} (original emphasis).

In competition with such extensive local and idiosyncratic contextualizations of the historical objects in question, historians tried to establish their own interpretations and conceptual order for the sources by assembling them into new entities. They applied a variety of policies to contain and counter external influences. In the case of the *Schweizerische Urkundenregister*, such strategies were mainly textual and conceptual. The first step in breaking any local hegemony of interpretation was the decision to order the charters only chronologically, not according to historically given entities such as dioceses, lordships, or cantons, as the negotiations with François Forel show. This decision not only forestalled any discussion about rubrics, but also indirectly highlighted the common Swissness of these charters. They were rendered similar as part of a Switzerland *avant la lettre*—a completely anachronistic construction. The possibility of ruling out forged traditions by applying scientific methods to declare some charters and local accounts of origin as *spuria* constituted another means for shaping new contextualizations. The short descriptions of the charters found in the *Urkundenregister* delivered a further instrument for scholarly composition and rearrangement. While the form of the *regestae* was predetermined in general (including date, place, issuers, essential content of the agreement the charter was about, and some other features), it still left space for subtle manipulation. In particular, the required entry for "essential content" allowed for reassessments of a charter's meaning, which could counterbalance previous interpretations.

For the *Monumenta graphica*, Sickel also developed ways to appropriate the sources according to his new scientific criteria. These strategies aimed at a radical decontextualization of the sources in question. To begin with, photography itself provided the most convincing arguments for this kind of rearrangement, since its technical restrictions already standardized the image of the source. Oversized charters, for instance, had to be excluded, and the photographs also worked selectively by cutting out certain features, like the *verso* of the charters. Decontextualization was completed by the fact that Sickel decided not to comment on the sources he showed in his work, a decision in keeping with contemporary rhetoric that deemed photography capable of allowing objects to speak for themselves. While the diplomatist had originally planned to add extensive annotations that would have contributed to a national paleography of Austria, he ultimately renounced this intention, writing that this was the only way he could "fend off" the commentaries that were offered from different sides without offending the collaborators (Bretholz 1909, p. 17f.). While Sickel justified his choice as a conceptual decision based on the self-explicating potential of the new technique, his erasure of context also represented a conscious reaction against the attempts at interpretation provided by the various locally anchored interest groups, especially the archivists. Furthermore, it cleared the path for interpretations of the sources in the tenor of a national Austrian history.

Conclusion

The analysis of the object-related working practices of historians and their allies and counterparts inside and outside the archives in the process of historical research captures several features of the relationship between the order of the archive and the

practices of historians in the second and last third of the nineteenth century. First, the contributions of their partners and opponents were key to the working practices and conceptual decisions of historians. The process of appropriating the historical sources was determined not only by the explicit scientific goals of the scholars. While historians tended to underline the scientific reasons for their choices, in practice those choices were also shaped by the concurring interests, goals, and interpretations of all the other actors involved in the field of historical practice: archivists, amateurs from different professional fields, clerics, and so forth. Historical research in this sense appears as a negotiated social practice. In both cases studied, state agencies in particular appear as major collective players that structured access to historical sources. While they provided assistance in the form of material resources, instruments of power, and a strong interest in promoting research projects deemed useful for national history, states also were important gatekeepers of archives.

Second, the archive comes into view not as *the* central site of historical research, as it is often stylized in the collective self-image of historians, but as only one of many sites of historical work, all shaped by social conflict and by diverging frames of interpretation. Nevertheless, while scholarly working practices were only partly sited in the archive itself, they increasingly found their critical boundary in the archive. As the original documents became more and more powerful as the source of scientific authority in the field of history (Saxer 2005), even the fairly amateurish *Schweizerische Urkundenregister* had to go back to the archive to match its copied artifacts against the archival documents. There again, historical research was confronted with already existent contexts of archival order that were sustained by various local actors and had to negotiate its degree and form of access to the sources in question.

Third, by collecting, registering, or visualizing the archival objects in question, scholars dislocated and mobilized them conceptually, and sometimes even physically. The historical objects under scrutiny changed their medium and form through a whole series of inscriptions (Lenoir 1998). The dislocation and insertion of sources into new contexts, like their multiplication as published editions, registers, and facsimiles, changed their epistemic status. At the same time, however, such processes ultimately led to a renewed demobilization of the sources, since the newly created secondary repositories of sources tended to be very durable, capable of surviving many historiographical trends. The new collections, editions, and visualizations stabilized and reified the historians' typologies and understandings of the sources by delivering implicit historical interpretations below the level of historiographical narratives—sunken into the infrastructures of research themselves.

Fourth, while the process of mobilizing and demobilizing archival objects had a long tradition in early modern administrative, legal, and scholarly practices, it added new features in the second and third half of the nineteenth century. The mobilization of archival objects became more and more a scientific and professional endeavor, matching the ideal of objectivity that prevailed in professional scholarship at the time. The example of Theodor Sickel shows that such approaches also offered new career opportunities and niches of specialization. Furthermore, the standards of source editing slowly evolved toward a more thorough consideration of the original

document and of the archival histories of the documents (Saxer 2005). The transition from older practices almost exclusively based on derivative artifacts to a more consistent focus on the original and its history of transmission can be seen in the *Schweizerische Urkundenregister*. From the example of the *Monumenta graphica*, we can see how this transition was further enhanced by technologies of visualization based on new notions of objectivity. Thus, the significance and worth of the archival original was enhanced at the same time as editions following newly developed, heightened scholarly standards or photographic facsimiles claimed to make visits to the archive superfluous by guaranteeing the unaltered reproduction of archival sources. These parallel movements fed on a shared focus on the original.

Finally, these two examples stand for a major trend in nineteenth-century source editions, unprecedented in its scale and totality: the overpowering drive to rearrange all sources within a framework of national history in order to build secondary national corpora of sources that could function as a tool for national politics of history. This trend obscured older forms of grouping and understanding historical sources. As we have seen, not all the actors in the field of historical culture accepted it without reservation. Many archivists in particular insisted on alternative contextualizations and criteria of order for the archival objects in their custody. For all its demonstrative objectivity, the concept of the original source was profoundly political from the outset.

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